

Hill County Court House
Hillsboro, Texas

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
San Francisco, California

PHOTO-DATA BOOK REPORT
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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HILL COUNTY COURT HOUSE

Hillsboro, Hill County, Texas

ADDRESS: Hillsboro, Texas
OWNER: County of Hill, Texas
OCCUPANT: County of Hill, Texas
USE: County Office and Courts Building

PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

This structure is the fourth court house built to serve as the administrative center for Hill County. It is a classic example of the Victorian court house, many of which were built in Texas during the years following the Civil War.

"C. N. Brooks built the first court house in Hillsboro. The material used in this plain structure was elm poles, and it was covered with boards held in place by elm poles. It was about twelve feet square, the entrance was adorned with an old fashioned clap-board door shutter, and the floor was the most common at that time---the natural surface of mother earth.

"In June, 1854, the court ordered that \$200.00 be appropriated out of the treasury for building a courthouse (Hill County organized May 14, 1853), to be a frame 30 by 25 feet; sills not less than eight inches in diameter, square (?), and at least four pillars of rock under each sill, plates not less than six inches square, corner posts not less than six inches square, stud-ding not less than four inches square after being hewn on both sides so as to admit ceiling; a sufficient number of cross girders; rafters not more than two feet apart; covered with shingles or boards showing not more than eight inches; ten foot wall; two doors, five windows, etc.

"The first substantial courthouse was a two story brick building, which was burned down September 3, 1872...The fire was supposed to be the work of an incendiary.

"In 1874, another court house, also a two-story brick, was erected at a cost of \$15,000; and this served until the present...structure was erected."*

W. O. Dodson, architect, was commissioned to design the present structure, and the contract (dated December 19, 1889) for construction was issued to Lovell, Miller, and Hood for \$83,000. There was a stipulation in the contract that the structure would be completed within one year.

There seems to have been little of significance in regard to historical events associated with the present structure. Such events did occur in the earlier court houses, though their interest is of concern only to local levels. During the first trial in the first Hill County Court House, the plaintiff was stabbed to death by the defendant; and the court in turn killed the defendant when he fled from the court room and resisted arrest. The court house of 1854 was a rallying point for recruiters of Hood's Texas Brigade, which later proved itself in northern Virginia during the civil war. Court records were destroyed during the fire of September 3, 1872; and much of the county history during a formative period was thus lost. A line drawing of the first court house is reproduced in Kirkpatrick, page 41.

Inquiries regarding original plans or early photographs of this or earlier Hill County court houses seem to indicate that these do not remain in existence.

REFERENCES AND SOURCES:

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|---------------------|--|
| *Kirkpatrick, A. Y. | <u>Early Settlers Life in Texas and the Organization of Hill County.</u>
Hillsboro, Texas. 1909 |
| Reese, James Verdo | historian. Personal interview
2109 Arpdale, Austin, Texas |

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. Architectural interest and merit: Plan type of this building is Palladian, though handling of form and detail might be considered early French Renaissance. Liberties have been taken in the handling of these earlier precedents with all of the fervor that the architect of the Victorian era could muster. The condition of the fabric is excellent, the building having been well maintained with few alterations throughout its history.

B. Technical description of exterior.

1. Overall dimensions: 92'-6" by 92'-6". Four stories high including attic story.
2. Foundations: Limestone coursed ashlar.
3. Wall construction: Limestone, split faced coursed ashlar--- with trim, quoins, and detail of smooth limestone.
4. Chimneys: internal, limestone.
5. Openings: Doorways and doors: double swinging, glazed, round headed doors identical each facade flanked with two smooth limestone (Corinthian capped) pilasters each side. Banks of thin, high, round-headed, double hung windows over all entrance doors. Windows and shutters: Double hung, round headed first and third stories, square headed on second story. Solid wood casement shutters cover portions of windows on west facade only.
6. Roof: Shape, covering: Mansard shingled (formerly wood, now mineral surfaced) on timber construction. Cornice, eaves: Wood and stone heavily moulded. Metal gutters. Dormers, cupolas: Wood dormers extend from Mansard roof. These are heavily moulded in wood with double hung windows. Wood cupola almost three stories above roof contains clock and bell. Cupola covered with patterned metal shingles.

C. Technical description of interior.

1. Floor Plans: Circulation system by halls from doorways on all four sides to central stairway. Offices and courts open to hallways.
2. Stairways: Interior, wood.
3. Flooring: wood.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: plaster.
5. Doorways and doors: varnished oak. Some doors paneled; other door s paneled and glazed.
6. Trim: Var nished wood.

7. Hardware: not significant.
8. Lighting: modern electric fixtures, original illumination probably by gas.
9. Heating: originally cast iron stoves vented to stone chimneys.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Occupies town square laid out on a north-south-east-west axis. Principal entrance (though all facades are identical) is on the east.
2. Enclosures. None, though portions of enclosures erected in 1912 still remain.
3. Outbuildings. None extant.
4. Walks: Concrete, circumscribe building with central walks to street from all four entrance doors.
5. Landscaping, gardens, etc.: Not significant.

Prepared by

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November 28, 1961

Approved

Charles S. Pope

Architect, Historic Structures, WODC

Date

January 9, 1962
NPS